

BALLET TODAY

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A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO BALLET EVERYWHERE

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PETER REVITT'S

BALLET GUYED

with a foreword by MARY CLARKE

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

I AM writing this while the summer season at Covent Garden of the New York City Ballet is still only just half way through its six weeks and the full repertoire will be covered by Miss Caryl Brahms in the next issue. First impressions are already sorting themselves out and it is safe to say that no visiting company since the war has stimulated such eager discussion and argument which is always a sign of keenest interest. On the first night, July 10th, there was a feeling throughout the Royal Opera House that the audience not only wished to welcome the company for its own sake but as a "thank you" to Balanchine for giving this country his master work, *Ballet Imperial*. Miss de Valois in her warm, obviously heartfelt speech on the last night of Sadler's Wells' long season had put into words for us what we all felt, and when the curtain fell on *Serenade*, with which the New York City Ballet made its London debut, the audience not only plainly loved the ballet but wanted the company to know how welcome they all were.

These dancers are young, and have the vitality and attack which we have learned to associate with America. They sweep across the stage with fine, open movements and all the girls seem to have a remarkable *grand jeté*. What we have discovered with considerable surprise is that the dancers on the whole lack individuality, and the *corps de ballet* remains completely anonymous. Maria Tallchief is magnificent, Tanaquil Le Clercq looks as though she will be in an unclassified category by herself as Riabouchinska once was; Patricia Wilde is a strong technician who seems to typify what we are already beginning to think of as "a Balanchine dancer", while Yvonne Mounsey has the grand style of our own Pamela May. But it is, perhaps, significant that the two dancers who stand out most markedly as individuals are Melissa Hayden and Janet Reed, neither of whom has been with the company for long. Balanchine not only seems indifferent to male dancing but to have a downright dislike of it so it is not perhaps fair to find the men an all-round disappointment since they have so few opportunities. Their partner-

ing is extremely good all through the company but they are too often allowed only to rush in, support one or more girls and then rush out again. Francisco Moncion stands out, not so much as a dancer but as an artist of superb simplicity who can characterise a role as no other member of this company seems to have the power to do. (It is Magallanes' inability in this direction which makes him so disconcerting in such ballets as *Orpheus* and *Illuminations*.) Moncion's performance in *The Prodigal Son* will probably prove to be the great personal triumph of the season, as it was for Lifar in 1929. The audience response to this twenty-one year old ballet showed that in England our warmest appreciation is still reserved for the ballet which tells a story in dancing. Such a ballet also serves to highlight the brilliance of a work such as *Symphony in C* which is enervating if one has already seen another themeless ballet during the same evening.

The repertoire of the New York City Ballet is not yet nearly varied enough, but this is still a very new company which has many years ahead in which to develop, and if we consider how meagre the Sadler's Wells list of ballets would look if shorn of its borrowings we will, I believe, hold our criticism on that score for some time to come. We are all more than grateful not to have been inflicted with yet another *Les Sylphides* and *Swan Lake, Act 2*.

The production of *Orpheus* makes me bring up once more the subject of the different ways in which one may react to a ballet according to where one is sitting. After all I had heard of *Orpheus* it was a most bitter disappointment to me on the first night. Only the journey back from the underworld and Eurydice's immediate, pitiful return to death as Orpheus looked at her moved me in any way—and even this lost considerably in effect because I had never been more than faintly interested in what went before. At the second performance I sat in the stalls and saw it "straight on". It was a revelation and I was enthralled. *Orpheus* is constructed to be seen entirely as a fresco of moving figures against the night-blue cyclorama. The third dimension does not matter at all and the moment one can see round or over the figures the effect is lost. This happens when one sits at the side or higher than the grand tier. From above, also, the effect of the cyclorama is lost. It is no doubt a serious flaw that a choreographer should plan a whole ballet with only one viewpoint in mind, but in fairness to Balanchine it must be said that *Orpheus* was designed for a theatre in which the rows of seats are straight, and the deep horseshoe of the Royal Opera House disturbs the symmetry of almost every ballet to a greater or lesser degree. *Symphonic Variations*, for example, should never be seen from the side, and no one sitting beyond about seat No. 65 in the first row of the stalls circle can see the Queen Mother and Siegfried on their thrones in the third act of *Le Lac des*

Cygnets. (I could go on for ever citing other examples).

One feature of the New York City Ballet season which has come in for general and most favourable comment is the lighting which has been admirable throughout. Miss Jean Rosenthal brought no extra equipment with her but seems to have found a way of using the Covent Garden existing facilities which the staff of five years' experience still fails to understand. The orchestra also, possibly stimulated by an entirely new repertoire, have been much livelier than usual.

The eleventh hour cancellation of Miss Martha Graham's London season came as a great disappointment, for although the critics were beginning to wonder how they could cope with six press nights in one week they felt that the time was ripe for an experience so new. A recurrence of a knee injury incurred in Paris was the cause and we all hope that Miss Graham will keep her promise to return next year. It may be some small consolation to her to feel that when she does return it may be at a time when visitors from all over the world will be in London and she may thus find an even wider audience than would be the case in any other year. Furthermore the clash of dates between her season at the Piccadilly Theatre and that of the New York City Ballet at Covent Garden might have affected both theatres to some extent, stimulating as the contrast between the two styles would have been.

I have to thank the Yugoslav Folk Dancers and Singers for one of the most enchanting evenings I have ever spent in a theatre. The Yugoslav Embassy arranged for a single performance before an invited audience at the Scala Theatre on July 25th and we are all most deeply grateful. These folk dancers were the winners at the Fourth International Musical Eisteddfod at Llangollen this year and, on this showing, they look like being unbeatable so long as they care to enter for any such competition. They are so completely natural that they are utterly without self-consciousness and the result is a perfect theatrical entertainment which would delight the most sophisticated audience in the world. The whole dance vocabulary is probably not more than half-a-dozen steps but the skill with which they are mingled, the change of tempi and direction of the dance patterns and the amazing precision of each dancer are an inexhaustible delight. No *corps de ballet* that ever existed could keep the form of the dance with such exactitude as did this troop. One dance, performed by eight men and eight women without any accompaniment, was a revelation of rhythm as they speeded up or slowed down, jumped, stepped or scuffed their feet as they moved round in a large circle. The keeping of a perfect circle, now spread out, now contracted, or broken into semi-circles and re-formed was one of the wonders of the whole performance. I should hate to think of these

dancers losing one iota of their present simplicity, but their entertainment of songs and dances exactly as they presented it at the Scala with their native instruments and their amazing drummer, might well find the same kind of welcome as did the *Chauve Souris* when it first burst upon London.

The filming of *Tales of Hoffmann* is well under weigh at the Shepperton studios belonging to Sir Alexander Korda for whom Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger are making the film. It is believed to be the first film for which the whole of the sound has been recorded in advance so that the film can be shot silent to a playback. The music is by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham and sounds magnificent. This pre-recording means that the whole film can be made on a single stage, for while filming goes on at one end, workmen can be erecting another set at the other end without the noise interfering. This will save a great deal of time—a most important factor since Moira Shearer and Frederick Ashton have to be finished by the end of August in time to go to New York with the Sadler's Wells Ballet. In addition to devising the choreography and helping with the movement, Ashton also appears as the dwarf in the "Legend of Kleinzack" which is danced as a ballet while Hoffmann sings it. On the set Ashton clutches the umbrella presented to him for the American tour and seems to be regarding it as a mascot for he declares that he dare not put it down for a second except when he is actually being filmed. Moira Shearer, in addition to appearing as the doll, Olympia, is also the Stella of the Prologue and Epilogue—Hoffmann's last love, while Helpmann will have an unequalled opportunity of showing his versatility by playing the four different villains of the various episodes. When I saw him he was looking amazingly filthy as Dr. Coppelius—a wonderful piece of make-up and costuming.

With regard to my review last month of the revival of *Gaieté Parisienne*, Mr. E. G. Derrington of International Ballet has written to me explaining that with regard to the omission from the programme of the name of Etienne de Beatmont as the original designer, a certain number of his designs were only available in copy-form and as in some small details they might differ from the actual drawings made by the artist, at the request of M. Massine the credits in the programme were changed. Congratulations are due to John Bainbridge who produced working sketches for the scene painters from these copies, under Massine's guidance and memory, for the set bears a remarkable resemblance to the original.

I have over-run alarmingly the space I usually allow myself but cannot finish without drawing attention to the special Competition on Page 22 which I think you will find as fascinating as any Quiz Game. P.W.M.

END OF SEASON REFLECTIONS

By MARY CLARKE

THE last night of the Sadler's Wells Ballet's long season, on July 8th, was rather like the end of a season by a visiting company for, as Miss de Valois said, they had never been away for six months before and their London audience was virtually saying goodbye until 1951. There will be an odd week's season in August, true, but the real work of the year in London is over and this is the time to look back and consider the achievement.

The important development of policy was the invitation of Balanchine and Petit to stage works for the company. The result was much the same as when Massine staged his ballets for Sadler's Wells, namely a considerable enlivening of the atmosphere by the introduction of new ideas and new methods. The dancers responded magnificently, enjoying the novelty as much as the audience, and some new personalities, overlooked for years by the resident choreographers, blossomed overnight. Both works were received with real enthusiasm and I think everyone hopes that this

ROWENA JACKSON AS THE BLUE BIRD IN "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY". HER DANCING IN THIS AND "LES PATINEURS" HAS BEEN MUCH TALKED ABOUT DURING THE PAST SEASON

Photograph by Bryan Ashbridge



policy will continue and we shall have other visiting choreographers—Tudor and Robbins, for instance—to work alongside our own.

Choreographically, this year, the palm went to Balanchine for his great work, *Ballet Imperial*. Petit's *Ballabile* was not in the same class but it too had its charms and both choreographers introduced magnificent designers to the Wells repertoire. A Berman decor had been long overdue and the Clavé sets for *Ballabile* were entirely ravishing.

This year's native contribution, Ninette de Valois' *Don Quixote*, had its admirers but it was not for me. Ashton's only new ballet, *Illuminations*, was, of course, for another company, but he revived his fine *Dante Sonata* and re-expanded his hardy perennial *Facade*.

The dancers had a long and tiring but rewarding season and almost all made marked progress. Fonteyn added to her great classical roles an extra lustre that I can only describe as "illumination". She danced wonderfully but it was the character and the life that she breathed into her interpretations that set them on a special plane. Shearer gained a new vitality and freedom and stole laurels from Fonteyn in *Ballet Imperial*. Beryl Grey had an initial spell of illness and bad luck but triumphed with her superlative dancing in *Ballet Imperial*. Violetta Elvin made enormous strides, exhibiting a new assurance and radiance and dancing memorably in *Le Lac des Cygnes* and *Ballabile*. To Helpmann belongs most credit, I think, for the survival of *Don Quixote* and he performed all his other roles with his customary finesse. The quiet authority of Michael Some is increasingly impressive and both he and John Field achieved real brilliance in the third act of *Le Lac des Cygnes*.

It was sad to say farewell to Harold Turner after so many years; I still cling to the fond hope that when the company returns to London he will find time to dance some of the character parts in which his knowledge and experience could be invaluable for years to come. The 21st Anniversary performance of *The Rake's Progress* at Sadler's Wells underlined the richness that older dancers can give to character roles and I think the whole impact of the classics at Covent Garden is diluted by the overall youth of the company.

Other performances that remain vividly in my mind are those of Pamela May in *Dante Sonata* and as the Lilac Fairy; Gillian Lynne in *Checkmate*; Rowena Jackson in the *Blue Bird pas de deux*; Nadia Nerina as Mam'zelle Angot; Leslie Edwards in everything he

(Continued at foot of page 19)

HAIL AND FAREWELL

by JANET SINCLAIR

THE last night of the Sadler's Wells season at Covent Garden, July 8th, 1950, gave to the audience, among other things, the opportunity to say good-bye to two Sadler's Wells artists who have been with the company since pre-war days. Harold Turner is the first of the great English dancers to leave the stage and the reception given to him and to Palma Nye as they made their adieux at the end of *Le Tricorne* must have been as exciting and as moving to the two dancers as it was to us, the audience.

Turner was the first Sadler's Wells virtuoso dancer and is as yet unrivalled in his own field. He joined the company in 1934, his first creations being the Dancing Master and the Man with the Rope in *The Rake's Progress*. He was soon filling most of the classical roles, Harlequin, *Blue Bird*, *Casse Noisette*, *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Les Sylphides*; he took over the leading role in *Les Rendezvous*, and in 1935 Ashton gave him the Young Man in *Baiser de la Fée*; however, in this ballet he was overshadowed by the remote, exquisite Argyle and by the attention audiences were beginning to pay to the young Fonteyn, here creating her first classical character; also—though this may seem incredible to audiences of today who are familiar with his Rake and his Miller—in those days his only method of expressing emotion, passion or despair was by an incoherent shaking of the head. Exuberance and a magnificent technique were Turner's forte, and in the Peasant *pas de deux* from *Giselle* and in *Les Patineurs* (1937) he showed the audience that England could produce a male dancer fully as virile and as exciting as were the vital young Russians. In the same year came *Checkmate*, which burst upon us like a bombshell. Turner and Helpmann in those days divided between themselves the plums of the repertoire and the affection of the audience, and the contrast between their differing styles of dancing gave an added interest to the performances of the classics. The two pairs—Turner and Honer, Helpmann and Fonteyn—represented on the one side the hard swift brilliance and strength of the Italian school, in strong contrast to the extended lines and dreamy elegance of the Russian style of the other couple, and it was a source of never-ending fascination to the audience to watch the same classical *pas de deux* danced at subsequent performances by the two different casts.

It was with *Les Patineurs*, however, that magnificent and deft piece of bravura, that Turner was revealed as the virtuoso *par excellence*. Here he had scope for

every breathtaking technical feat and he seized his opportunities and exploited them to the full: despite the many dancers who have followed him in the part, the writer can think of only one other who danced with the same delightful, casual insouciance, the same unsophisticated delight in the glory of physical movement. The ballet was a real *tour de force*, with the magnificent Honer throwing off *fouettés* with an ease then unimaginable outside the Russian ballet, with Miller's quiet charm building up until it became less than anti-climax, the role of the unfortunate who must follow the turns; Brae and May, the heavenly twins, paired again and each gaining by contrast: Fonteyn and Helpmann gliding, cool and withdrawn, among the general excitement: and the *corps de ballet* so expertly drawn that it was impossible to visualise the alteration of a single step. But it was Turner's evening, a Turner who had found his Valhalla and who sailed exalted on the heights.

PALMA NYE AS THE MAID WEBSTER IN "A WEDDING BOUQUET"

Photograph by Felix Fonteyn



In 1940 he left the company and did not rejoin until 1945. During the interim he appeared with the Arts Theatre Ballet and the International Ballet, for which latter company he danced a *Blue Bird* no less brilliant than before but with improved control; and also served in the R.A.F. When the Sadler's Wells Ballet re-opened Covent Garden, he revived for us the memory of his early triumphs and then throughout the following five years the audience were privileged to watch an extraordinary metamorphosis: the classical virtuoso slowly, with great pains and the utmost perseverance, turning himself into the intelligent character dancer. Had anyone in the 'thirties suggested that the day would come when Turner would give us a fine Rake, the possibility would have been greeted with hoots of derisive laughter, but ten years later the miracle was accomplished. He in no way copied the performances of those who had gone before: this Rake was an entirely new performance, with a Mad Scene unrivalled in domination of stage and audience.

Nevertheless, it was with *Le Tricorne* that he showed us most plainly the complete change he had accomplished in attack and in attitude to his role. Most of the audience approached his first performance of the Miller with trepidation: this role was Massine's, Massine's greatest triumph in his own masterpiece. Turner rose to the occasion as he had risen to so many others, and his performance, to the amazement and enthusiasm of the audience, could stand beside Massine's without a blush, lacking only the split-second musical timing of the Russian. The rest was there, the impish humour, the virile earthy characterisation, the strongly marked rhythm. Followers of English ballet should be proud of Turner, proud if they were fortunate enough to be present at his last performance, proud for two reasons: for the virtuoso who compelled attention at a time when the critics, amateur and professional, could see nothing good that did not come out of Russian ballet; and for the character dancer who could stand beside Massine in a role that was Massine's own. It seems a pity that Turner should leave ballet while still comparatively young; one can only hope that he may succeed in teaching the boy students at the Sadler's Wells School a little of the technique as well as the artistry he has shown us in the past fifteen years.

Palma Nye, who shared in the last-night demonstration of affection and goodwill, has grown to be the backbone of the *corps de ballet*, and all honour must be shown her for she always danced musically and well and she never looked bored, though heaven knows she must have had good cause to be. When she first danced in pre-war days, she showed great promise: indeed, it was she who opened the first full-length performance of *The Sleeping Princess* at the Sadler's Wells, dancing the Camelia Fairy: but somewhere in



Photograph by Gordon Anthony

HAROLD TURNER AS THE MILLER IN "THE THREE-CORNERED HAT", A ROLE WHICH HE TOOK OVER FROM MASSINE WITH SUCH STRIKING SUCCESS

her career she struck some snag, some deficiency or some prejudice that held her back. In the days just before the war, when so many young ladies danced on blindly oblivious of their arms, she and Fonteyn almost alone shared a *port de bras* that was soft and correct. Of her Miller's Wife, opinions are mixed: but it should be recorded that one of the few people known to the present writer who remembers the opening performance of *Le Tricorne* in 1919 and has been watching it ever since, said of Nye that she and Tchernicheva were the only two dancers to dance the role as Karsavina danced it—as a mature Spanish woman.

The photograph of Lubov Egorova in the Diaghilev production of *The Sleeping Princess* which appeared in last month's *Ballet Today* was reproduced by permission of the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection.

SADLER'S WELLS STARTS OUT AGAIN (I)

By FRANKLIN WHITE

I THINK it is common knowledge that when the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company came back from the North American continent just before last Christmas, the management had been asked to arrange our return this year. After the great success of the company in the comparatively few cities that we visited in America and Canada, this request was perhaps not so very surprising, but that it was the wish of so very many places thousands of miles from the scene of our late triumphs is I think significant of the really great impression that we made throughout that continent, both artistically and socially.

Recently I was shown a map of North America on which was marked the route to be followed this autumn and the dates of each visit. It is tremendous in its dimensions, making the last trip look rather insignificant by comparison. A resumé of its extent is: September 10th/October 1st—New York; October 12th/13th—New Orleans; October 14th/15th—Houston; followed by a 38 hour journey across New Mexico to Los Angeles for October 18th/28th; then on to San Francisco for October 30th/November 12th. In contrast to the speedy journey from East to West, there now follows a slow trek back across to the Mid-West, where a large figure eight is described. During this time amongst other places visited will be: Sacramento, Lincoln, Kansas City, Dallas, Oklahoma City, St. Louis, Bloomington, Detroit, finishing at Chicago for Christmas, December 18th/31st.

This Christmas date at one of the largest cities in America is not entirely accidental. It was felt, I am told, that it would be more pleasant if it could be arranged for the company to spend its first Christmas out of England where there were the greatest facilities for entertainment appropriate to the season.

Possibly New Year's Eve, and certainly the first days of the year, will be spent travelling to Ottawa for one of the tour's forty-two performances of *Le Lac des Cygnes*. On to Montreal for January 3rd/8th, after which we cross the St. Lawrence river back into America for performances at Boston, January 8th/13th and a Gala at Westchester on January 15th before once more crossing the border via Niagara Falls to Toronto for the last eight shows, January 16th/20th. Next day, from Montreal again, we hope, remembering our exasperating wait there last time, our chartered 'plane will fly home sixty members of the company, the remaining half-dozen or so having left from New York after the Gala Performance in Westchester. It

may be remembered that the same number of dancers came home after Chicago last year, as the small size of the Canadian stages allows no large productions requiring the complete company. Altogether eight thousand miles will be traversed in the special train hired for the entire tour; this added to crossing the Atlantic both ways by air makes about ten thousand miles in all.

For the chartered 'plane this time B.O.A.C. have promised us a Strato-cruiser carrying sixty people, and the extra comfort, two decks, with room to move around and even a bar, can be looked forward to as an improvement in methods of touring, even on last time. All this is in addition to the fact that the people who travel in this 'plane fly direct, having a decided advantage over the remainder of the company who have to travel by the regular air service.

I have purposely gone into rather a lot of detail in describing the outline of this year's tour, with the idea of showing the things that have to be taken into account in the colossal planning of an expedition of this kind; things that at first appear so irrelevant that it is hard to believe that they must be taken into consideration even before the programme for any single night has been selected. It is easy for the audience to sit in front and expect a perfect production to unfold, or for us to come on to the stage without question and find everything in readiness, with no knowledge of what has gone on for months in advance.

During the last months of the war and in the five years since its end, under the auspices of first E.N.S.A., then the British Council and latterly of Mr. Sol Hurok, the company has visited 29 cities in goodwill tours of a dozen countries, returning to many of them several times. Except where over-cramped stage conditions made it impossible, performances were given of productions of equal size and quality to those staged under the good conditions of a London season. As our business manager, Mr. Herbert Hughes, said when telling me the details of this forthcoming tour: "Of this we can feel justly proud". This is in direct contrast to the general principle of touring, when the accent is usually on cutting everything down. Last year we made the largest theatrical expedition ever to cross the Atlantic and this time we will equal that record with almost double the length of time and miles to be traversed. That it must take a tremendous amount of planning is obvious, but by what type of organisation is the work that has been going on at



Photograph by Bryan Ashbridge

SOME IDEA OF THE SIZE OF A BACKCLOTH CAN BE GAUGED FROM THESE PICTURES OF THE LOADING PROCESS.
ONE LORRY LOAD BEING COMPLETED, STAGEHANDS PAUSE FOR A BREATH

Covent Garden since Christmas brought in to a complete whole? It is not in the limelight very often, but it is a side of the theatre that I find fascinating, especially in the case of this particular tour.

Although the management expected to receive the offer of this tour, nothing became official until Mr. Hurok came to England in April. However, things had been far from stagnant in spite of this. Meetings such as those of the Artistic Committee had been in progress. This Committee consists of Miss de Valois, Mr. Ashton, Mr. Lambert, Mr. Irving and the General Administrator of Covent Garden. At these meetings such problems as what ballets would be available to go to America, which of the repertoire taken last time would be repeated, what new works and revivals should be included this time, were discussed. Plans of this kind and many others were made in readiness but nothing more could be done. On Mr. Hurok's arrival talks began between him and Mr. Webster on the business side. Discussions took place as to what possibilities there were of our making any substantial amount of dollars, combined with the very important matter of choosing programmes from the available ballets that it was thought would not only be welcome to the audience, but which would show to the greatest degree every side of English ballet. This last point is very important. From the representative, as well as from the commercial side, these tours have long been recognised as an important means of showing the present development of this sphere of English artistic ideas and their execution. The development of the

ballet during its comparatively recent association with this country has proved a surprise abroad since the company has had the opportunity of so widely showing itself outside Great Britain, and its efforts in attempting to represent this country have won widespread approval. So good was the effect that a great honour was paid to it, when on the 1947 tour of Europe a high official of a diplomatic corps asked Mr. Hughes if the company had had lessons in diplomacy.

The preliminary discussions of the tour once completed, then followed the most complicated task of arranging the individual programmes for each tour. This is far from being a case of merely selecting a well-balanced programme from the available ballets—a multitude of other problems has to be considered, amongst them the distance and travelling time between each place. On this point alone hang many of the difficulties. For instance, each theatre management has its own ideas as to what artists and ballets they would like to see, especially when the visit is limited to a few nights. The full length classical ballets are very popular and are wanted everywhere, but if one town has asked for say *Le Lac des Cygnes* with a particular ballerina on the company's last night there, and the next town wants the same programme on the following night it may be impossible to ask that artist to travel all night or longer and dance *Odette-Odile* the following evening. Which performance will she give; in any case, is there sufficient time to strike, pack, travel and set the same scenery on the following night? Is the stage big enough to take the very large scenery,



Photograph by Lido

SERGE LIFAR HAS RECENTLY REVIVED HIS BALLET "DRAMMA PER MUSICA" IN WHICH NINA VYROUBOVA (SEEN HERE) NOW DANCES THE ROLE CREATED BY YVETTE CHAUVIRE

even when it is cut down and folded to the minimum? How many all night sessions have the stage staff already had doing just this type of thing? Can the various railway companies fit our special train into their timetable to enable this change to be made? How many one night stands and nights spent sleeping on the train without the comparative rest of a longer stay in a town and the comfort of a hotel are good for the dancers? If any one of these, and other factors makes it impossible to grant the manager's request, what other ballets would it like and can they be got there by that date? In fact, before the programme can be finally decided upon generally, the following have to be taken into account: the length of the tour, the places to be visited and in what order, the time and distance between each, the stages and their equipment, not to mention the general health of the company.

Meeting after meeting went on to arrange all this and other things, between Mr. Hurok, the Artistic Committee, the business and stage managements, en masse and separately. Thirty-two places to be visited in nineteen weeks! One thing forgotten or time incorrectly judged and, like ninepins, one arrangement falls against the next throughout the tour and everything may have to be arranged afresh.

(To be continued)

NEWS FROM PARIS

By FERDINAND REYNA

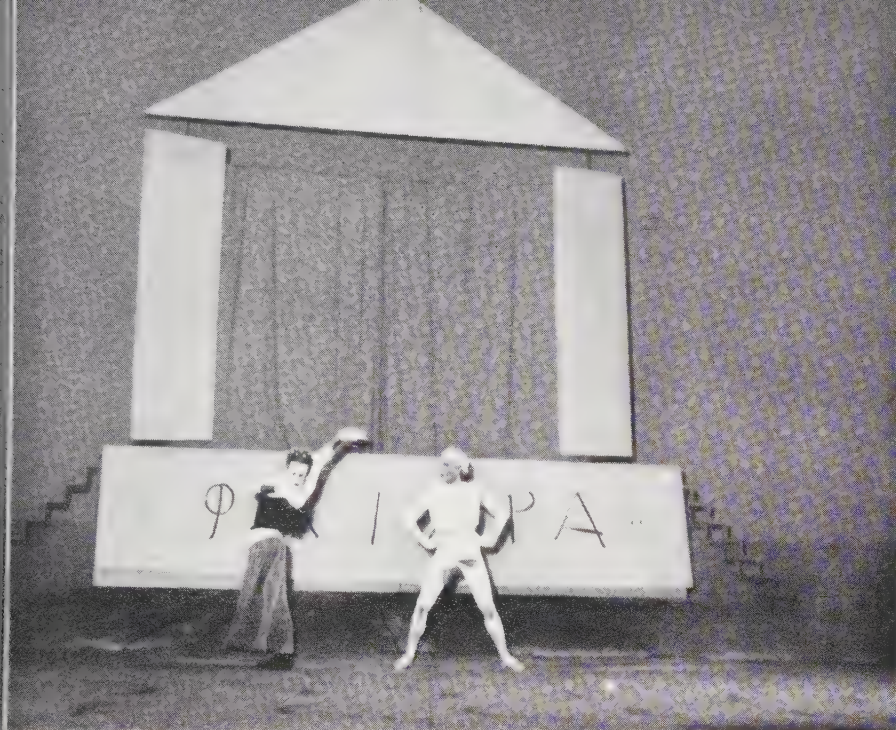
THE reception given by the Paris critics and public to Martha Graham and her company was, we feel, neither worthy nor justified. Some of the more important papers gave a mere summary of ten lines or so, others simply dismissed Martha Graham's art as tiresome, without analysing either her school or her ballets. The effort of a lifetime, such as hers, to create a new and unknown aspect of dancing, deserved better treatment. Her choreographic tableaux are admittedly austere, imbued with psychological nuances and implications. For visual pleasure there is only the decor—usually Constructivist—and the costumes, very subtle in line and colour. It is well known that the school of Martha Graham makes no use of academic technique, and that its inspiration has been the work of modern painters ranging from Kandinsky to Picasso. Without lacking in imagination, the ballet of Martha Graham is an earthly and earth-bound art. The academic dancer aspires to flight; Martha Graham, on the other hand, has imagined, amongst other discoveries, tensions and falls which incorporate the ground in the realm of gesture and movement.

Creations like *Errand into the Maze*, *Diversion of Angels* or *Eye of Anguish*, in which the psychological drama of King Lear is recaptured, should not be seen with indifference. Without being directly inspired by music, the compositions of Martha Graham are full of musicality. Her message from the modern American school of dancing remained unheard in Paris, which is a pity.

The last creation of the Paris Opera before the end of the season was *Phèdre*, in which the script by Jean Cocteau follows Racine's tragedy step by step. One of the most striking aspects of this production was the music of Georges Auric; strong, fiery and impassioned themes contrasted with heartrending tenderness, making the score a great musical drama.

On this occasion Jean Cocteau has taken no part in the choreography and has not collaborated with Serge Lifar in the same way as he did with Roland Petit in the creation of *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*. He has limited his work to the decor and costumes, in which he has been influenced neither by Ancient Greece nor by the court of Louis XIV. Decor and costumes are con-

TOUMANOVA AND
LIFAR IN "PHÈDRE",
THE NEW COCTEAU-
AURIC-LIFAR BALLET
RECENTLY PRODUCED
AT THE PARIS OPERA



Photograph by Lido

ceived without date or period. Cocteau himself has said that his aim was simply to furnish the great stage of the Opera with a kind of tragi-choreographic divertissement. The principal characters perform, in fact, in the foreground; upstage, there is a little theatre, like a small temple with a blue curtain which is drawn from time to time. We are then shown, as in a huge enlarged photograph, subsidiary characters, or scenes which could not be reproduced in the ballet, such as Theseus on his chariot, Neptune in the midst of the sea, etc. This idea is not new; it is an aspect of the mythical world, translated in the manner of Jean Cocteau, a manner which is already familiar. Serge Lifar, who takes the part of Theseus, has composed choreography which is reasonably coherent but almost always monotonous. Tamara Toumanova has found in *Phèdre* a role perfectly suited to her dramatic temperament. It would be unfair not to refer to the role of *Phèdre*'s nurse, in which Lycette Darsonval demonstrates her magnificent technique, now at its height.

Taken as a whole, *Phèdre* is a pompous ballet, the ambitions of its authors being realised thanks only to the means placed at their disposal by the Opera, and particularly to its *Corps de Ballet*, a supple instrument, perfectly trained to follow and realise the thought of any choreographer whatever.

At the same time as *Phèdre*, the Paris Opera produced *Dramma Per Musica*, Serge Lifar's ballet to the

music of Bach's "Coffee Cantata". This ballet was originally presented at Monte Carlo in 1947 with Yvette Chauviré as the star, and with decors by the artist Cassandre which had been inspired by a 17th Century engraving by Marolois. Before being shown in Paris, *Dramma per Musica* had also been produced at Florence and Rome. Before its Paris showing, this ballet aroused an odd controversy which placed the artist Cassandre in opposition to the Opera. In fact, the Opera management contented themselves with showing this ballet with a decor inspired by the same painting of Marolois from which M. Cassandre had made his adaptation, but no mention of Cassandre's name was made on the programme. It raises a nice point; Had the artist the right to draw inspiration without acknowledgment from the work of another, and could the Opera draw on the same sources as M. Cassandre, while dismissing him as a mere plagiarist?

However that may be, *Dramma per Musica*, after the lapse of time and with the present production at the Opera, is seen to be a somewhat old and threadbare matter.

Yvette Chauviré, Youly Algaroff, Vladimir Skouratoff, Boris Trailine and Leo Lauer had danced the leading roles at Monte Carlo with rare perfection. Nina Vyroubova took over Chauviré's role at the Opera, but the part does not seem to suit her very well. The libretto has been modified; Lifar dances

with his partners Bari and Lemoine, both young and energetic . . . it all seems rather studied and patched up, and hardly likely to interest a First Night audience.

* * *

The first number of the fortnightly review, "L'Opéra de Paris", has just been published under the auspices of the Director of the Opera, Mr. Georges Hirsch. This new periodical, handsomely illustrated in photographs, some of them coloured, will be devoted to the activities of the Paris Opera, the centre of the French tradition in Opera and Ballet.

* * *

The Museum of the Paris Opera is now showing a special exhibition of souvenirs of Auguste Vestris and Nijinsky, which includes engravings, costumes and objects of personal interest. In addition, Serge Lifar has just published in the Editions Naegel, in Paris, *Auguste Vestris, le Dieu de la Danse*, a lively biography of the most famous scion of the Vestris, that Italian family of dancers which dominated the French stage for more than a century.



Photograph by Felix Fonteyn

MARGOT FONTEYN AND ROBERT HELPMANN IN "L'ILE DES SIRENES", ONE OF THE NEW SHORT BALLETS IN WHICH THEY APPEARED DURING THEIR RECENT PROVINCIAL TOUR

Fonteyn-Helpmann Tour

I WENT down to Brighton on July 3rd for the last of the Fonteyn-Helpmann performances. If all the other halls they visited were as crowded as The Dome (and I understand they were) they must have had a most successful tour, and if all the audiences were as vociferous they must have been greatly heartened in what must have been an arduous undertaking.

The atmosphere in this particular hall was as inimical to ballet as any of the other arenas in which it has been seen during the past year or two, and in the event what was presented was a display of fine dancing barely related to ballet, which obviously pleased the Brighton audience every bit as well. The adagio from *The Sleeping Beauty* loses most of its theatrical excitement under these conditions but the *Casse Noisette grand pas de deux*, which included the *Sugar Plum Fairy* solo and the coda which Sadler's Wells have always omitted, came over as the best thing of the evening. Alfred Rodrigues arranged three items, of which one, *L'île des Sirènes* (the title in itself is sufficient explanation of its subject) was good enough to make one feel that, cut by five minutes, it would be an admirable addition to a really first-class revue, and I mean this as praise. It could hardly be expected to provide Fonteyn with a role worthy of her gifts. Helpmann gave a Hussar dance which, simple in idea (it plainly derives from Richard Hearne's famous one-man launcers), and in actual steps, was so brilliantly put over that it deservedly evoked cheers.

P. W. M.

Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet

Sadler's Wells Theatre re-opens for the autumn season on September 18th and on the next evening the Theatre Ballet will give its first performance. The programme will include the ballet which George Balanchine created for them and which will have its actual première at the Opera House, Manchester, on Thursday, September 14th. The ballet is in symphonic form and will be danced to Haydn's Trumpet Concerto. It may be remembered that when Balanchine was in England earlier in the year to mount his *Ballet Imperial* for Sadler's Wells Ballet at the Royal Opera House, he offered to create a ballet for the junior company and he kept his promise on his return with his own New York City Ballet. On his previous visit Balanchine also commissioned a ballet from John Cranko which, by the time this paragraph appears, will probably have been given by the New York City Ballet at Covent Garden. This ballet is called *The Witch* and is danced to Ravel's Double Piano Concerto. There is a strong possibility that it will go into the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet repertoire later in the season, together with another new work by Cranko. There will also be three revivals: *The Prospect Before Us*, *Assembly Ball* and *The Vagabonds*.

DANCE IN AMERICA - 1949-1950

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS, NEW DOMESTIC WORKS PROVIDE
THE MOST NOTABLE SEASON IN THE PAST DECADE

By ARTHUR TODD

THE 1949-1950 season will go down in the annals of American dance history as the time that the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company conquered the United States. Likewise auspicious, on its own merits and because it was a portent of a greater international exchange in the future, was the world première of Frederick Ashton's *Illuminations*, composed for the New York City Ballet Company by Britain's greatest present-day choreographer. Further flavour was added to the American scene by Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris, of which *Carmen* was its major success. Also from France came Yvette Chauviré, *première danseuse étoile*, who added considerable lustre to the Spring Season of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

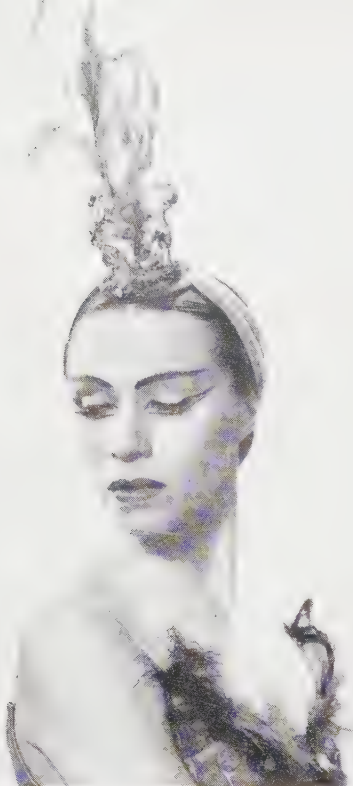
Unquestionably the importation of British and European companies, dancers and choreographers has made lasting artistic and cultural impacts on the American dance scene. As a result, these imports have been either directly or indirectly responsible for the European appearances of the New York City Ballet Company, the American Ballet Theatre, Martha Graham and her dance company and José Limon and his dance group. George Balanchine has already proved his right to the title of America's greatest classical ballet choreographer with his *Ballet Imperial*, staged for the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company at Covent Garden on April 5th. It was terribly unfortunate that England was robbed of the opportunity of seeing Martha Graham's work owing to a recurrence of the knee injury which enabled her to appear only at two performances in Paris. By the end of the summer of 1950, London and the British provinces will have witnessed the European debut of America's most vital new company, the New York City Ballet Company, and our finest all-round company, the American Ballet Theatre, will have finished 1950 with its most comprehensive European tour to date.

The 1949-50 season in New York got off to an early start when the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo put on a two week season, beginning September 16th, at the Metropolitan Opera House. Its one new work, Tatiana Chamie's charming but inconsequential *Birthday* was beautifully danced by Nana Gollner. Due to the lack of other new works, there were revivals of Lichine's *Graduation Ball*, Antonia Cobos' *The Mute Wife* and Fokine's *Igrouchki*. The stars of the company,

though obviously rested after a summer holiday, performed only creditably and the *corps* was extremely ragged and uneven.

The first real excitement of the season occurred on October 6th, when Les Ballets de Paris opened at the Winter Garden Theatre for what proved to be a long, popular and financially successful run. Booked at the last minute to open in New York before the Sadler's Wells debut, Petit's company, exciting though it was, in no wise diminished the lustre of the Wells' première. The Parisian company's chief claim to interest was its theatrical effectiveness, its bravura performance by Renée Jeanmaire in the title role of *Carmen*, and the superb decor by Antoine Clavé. Though Jeanmaire was brilliant, fiery, vivacious and glamorous in *Carmen*, her performance seemed all in one key and thus seemed lacking in dramatic motivation. The other ballets fared less well. *Le Rendezvous* was a minor work and *L'Oeuf à la Coque* was geared more closely to American musical comedy than to what we consider balletic theatre. William Dollar's *Le Combat*, beautifully performed by Colette Marchand and Milorad Miskovitch as a *pas de deux*, lacked the unity it finally achieved as *The Duel* in the New York City Ballet Company's version that included a small but important ensemble. Nevertheless, Les Ballets de Paris had the definite assets of spirited dancers and stunning decor that resulted in more theatrical brilliance than balletic elegance.

Three days later, on October 9th, the supreme event of the season, the American debut of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company took place at the Metropolitan Opera House. As has already been so superbly reported by Mary Clarke in the special issue of *Ballet Today*, the name and fame of the company spread across America like a prairie fire and the public, like the critics, were swept off their feet by what is undoubtedly the great ballet company of our generation. In analysing the chief qualities of Sadler's Wells, three main factors immediately come to mind. They are: one, that Margot Fonteyn is certainly one of the great ballerinas of our time; two, the *corps de ballet* is superior to that of any company, domestic or foreign, seen in America in the past twenty years; and, third, behind this whole company there is a leadership that is marked by a singleness of purpose and a fantastic integrity for quality and detail. Unquestionably,



Photograph by Walter E. Owen

MARIA TALLCHIEF AS THE FIREBIRD, ONE OF HER OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES WITH THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET

chief credit for this is due to Ninette de Valois, who, with her administrators and artistic directors, has moulded and created what we believe is the finest company of dancers to appear in America in recent years.

The Sadler's Wells particularly bright star, Margot Fonteyn, proved to be one of the freshest, most unspoiled and appealing ballerinas to appear in New York in recent memory. Hers, thankfully, was not the bravura brilliance and attitudinising characteristic of some ballerinas. Rather, Fonteyn's greatest effect was in her tenderness, graciousness and gentle womanliness. She danced with honesty, modesty and sensitivity but beneath the surface of her apparently effortless movement one could sense her tremendous technique and steel-like strength. Aside from these stellar attributes, it was indeed a distinct pleasure to see a ballerina who danced *with* her partners and company and not apart from or in front of them.

Though Fonteyn, quite naturally, received the most overwhelming reception, there were several other ballerinas in the company who made a strong impression on American audiences. The beautiful Moira Shearer was, of course, instantly set apart by those who

had already seen her in *The Red Shoes*. However, even more exciting was the unheralded emergence of Beryl Grey, a completely wonderful young dancer who was hailed by *Dance Observer* as "the most gifted dancer in the entire Sadler's Wells Ballet". Beryl Grey, particularly in her dual role in *Le Lac des Cygnes*, danced in a beautifully tempered classic style that was warmed by her own graciousness and very evident sincerity. The slim, dark and very attractive Violetta Elvin was still another example of the exceptionally high standards of merit that were in evidence throughout the whole group of soloists. Though Helpmann's gift of mime was duly appreciated, it was Michael Somes, John Hart and John Field who proved most notable in dance action. And, with the exception of de Valois' *The Rake's Progress*, Frederick Ashton walked away with all the choreographic honours. Finally, no summary of the Sadler's Wells first season would be complete without a deep bow to the uniformly high excellence of its musical accompaniments as supervised and conducted by Constant Lambert and Robert Irving. Likewise, the decor and costumes deserve special mention since their sparkling newness and freshness added considerably to the over-all effect of the various ballets.

BERYL GREY IN "LE LAC DES CYGNES". HER PERFORMANCE IN THIS BALLET WAS ONE OF THE GREAT SUCCESSES OF THE SADLER'S WELLS VISIT TO AMERICA LAST YEAR

Photograph by Walter E. Owen



Soon after the Sadler's Wells began their American road tour, the New York City Ballet Company opened its late fall season, running from November 24th to December 11th, at the City Center Theatre and it was during this engagement that Ninette de Valois first saw the company in performance and the outcome was an invitation for them to appear at Covent Garden in July of 1950. The one première, *Bourrée Fantasque*, performed to Chabrier's music, proved a sparkling and delightful addition to the repertoire. Its first section, wittily danced by Tanaquil Le Clerq and Jerome Robbins, was followed by a middle section that was marred by its static quality and the uncommunicative performances of Maria Tallchief and Nicholas Magallanes. The closing scene, full of dash, bounce and gaiety, was perhaps the most effervescent

of all and was further enriched by a sparkling performance by the always delightful Janet Reed. Of the three revivals, *Firebird* was far and away the most noteworthy and certainly one of Balanchine's most stunning recent works. He was abetted by Tallchief's intensity and pyrotechnics, Moncion's moving and human Prince Ivan, Stravinsky's ideal score and Chagall's riotously vivid decor and costumes. Lew Christensen's *Jinx*, originally composed for Dance Players in 1942, was not the success it might have been because it is primarily a dramatic work requiring more the type of personnel found in Ballet Theatre. William Dollar's *Ondine* was a weak reconstruction of Jules Perrot's century-old ballet and it has since been dropped from the current repertoire.

(To be concluded next month)

DANCING IN MUSICALS

by FRANK JACKSON

SEEING *Carousel* and *Golden City* within a few days of each other led me to reflect once more on the quality of the dancing in British and American musicals.

The first shock of *Oklahoma!* has now worn off; dances such as Agnes de Mille designed for this show are not only no longer a novelty but have become the standard by which dancing in musicals is today judged in this country; so much so that there are, as it were, quotes from de Mille and other American choreographers in Robert Helpmann's dances for *Golden City*. Yet, in spite of this the *Golden City* dances were uninteresting while the dances which de Mille arranged for *Carousel* are the best things in the show and the best work of de Mille's I have seen.

The so-called Zulu tribal dances at the end of *Golden City* are certainly exciting, but prove nothing because the excitement is not the work of the choreographer but results from the noise, drums, fire-eating and spectacular leaps of one of the dancers, formerly with Ballets Nègres.

In another current British musical, *King's Rhapsody*, there are the "Muranian" dances arranged by Pauline Grant about which I can only say that they do not stick in the memory. In case you might therefore suppose I have a poor memory, I should like to point out that I remember very vividly indeed

Michael Kidd's dances for the ill-fated *Finian's Rainbow* which I saw at the same theatre very many months ago.

Nor should I like to create the impression that I am using American musicals as a stick with which to beat the home product. In fact, as a theatre critic, I am extremely alarmed at the American invasion of our stage. But we have to learn from the successes of others and then use this knowledge for our own purposes.

There is certainly nothing wrong with the quality of our dancers. Underpaid, overworked, badly treated and poorly nourished as they are, they have a willingness to work which seems to me to border on heroism. In *Oklahoma!*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Brigadoon*, *High Button Shoes*, and the rest they proved beyond all doubt that they could do whatever was asked of them.

Is it the choreographers who are at fault? Too few of our best have made any serious attempt in the musical comedy field, but I should not care for the task of placing in any order of merit, say, de Mille, Helpmann, Tamiris.

The main defect, as I see it, lies in the debased status of so-called "musical comedy" dancing in this country. From the dance point of view, as from many others, our musicals are living in the past—and not the virile, witty past of the musical comedy at its



THE BALLET IN
THE FIRST ACT OF
THE BIG ENGLISH
MUSICAL, "KING'S
RHAPSODY"

Photograph by
Angus McBean

best, but the insipid, infantile past of the tradition in decline. It is not only the choice of subject matter which is at fault, though it is discouraging to note that our most successful recent musical still deals with the affairs of wish-fulfilment *Royalty*. Until quite recently, the dance side of a musical was confined to a few simple gyrations which had little or nothing to do with the action and were of use mostly as an interlude to rest the principals. The chorus, if young enough to stand on their two feet, were not expected to be able to do much else.

This style of dancing, known as "musical comedy", was, in fact, a sort of technical dustbin into which were thrown a few scraps of "tap" a bit of ballroom, but not very much of it, and even less of ballet. None of this was expected either to have any dramatic point or to be expressive in itself.

Oklahoma! dealt the death blow to this state of affairs by showing that dancing could be an integral part of the story, carrying it forward under the heightened emotional stress of the dance; that dancing in musical comedy could be complex, exciting and interesting in itself.

We still have not learned our lesson properly in this respect. The dances in *Golden City*, though in the de Mille manner, neither serve to advance the story nor increase our knowledge of the characters of the drama. Whereas, in *Carousel*, de Mille's dances and the story are so interwoven that the dancers even speak a few words and one of them, Bambi Linn, later takes part in the action—none of this seeming incongruous.

Then there is the question of style. Our musical comedy dancing, improved though it recently is, is still a rag, tag and bobtail affair, not to be taken seriously on its own account. Now and again a

choreographer will introduce a "classical" ballet into musical comedy (as, for example, in *Song of Norway*) as though the mere use of a mature technique resulted in mature dancing. But since musical comedy dancers are, by the nature of things, not likely to be first rate ballet dancers, it stands to reason that musical comedy ballet must remain elementary, uncomplicated and of little value.

The Americans have solved this difficulty by working out a style of musical comedy dancing which, though owing a great deal to ballet, is not so specialised and can therefore be danced well by people who would never necessarily make good ballet dancers. This style is extremely complex in itself, and very highly expressive, so that it is worth while for its own sake, even when it does not serve to forward the action of a story. Helen Tamiris' numbers in the revue *Touch and Go* are complete works in themselves and one of them, *Under the Sleeping Volcano* is, in its own style, a fine piece of work which deserves comparison with the best work of choreographers in the purer ballet style.

It adds up to this: American choreographers never "talk down" when they work in musicals. They give of their very best; they are progressively minded from the thematic and technical points of view; they demand a great deal from their dancers and from the audience. British choreographers, on the other hand, are inclined to work with their tongue in their cheek; they assume the Lowest Common Multiple for their audience IQ (though undoubtedly highly intelligent people themselves—which only makes things worse); they make the least possible demands on audience and dancers (*Golden City* is an exception in this particular respect); and they are inclined to direct their invention into old, safe grooves,

SCENE FROM THE
AGNES DE MILLE
BALLET IN "CAROU-
EL" WITH BAMBI
INN ON THE LEFT



Photograph by
Photocraft of
Kingston

But what is "safe" after all? It seems to me that since these days any theatrical venture is a highly expensive gamble, our musical comedy purveyors might just as well win, or lose, their thousands on something much more out of the rut than is usually considered possible.

Improvements in musical comedy choreography are difficult here because the modern school of dancing which produced de Mille and Tamiris, for example, has but small influence in this country. Even if choreographers could be found who could express themselves in this style, they would come up against a shortage of supply of dancers trained in this technique. I have said that our dancers, even with things as they are, can tackle anything successfully, and this is true;

but it would obviously be far better for all concerned if the dancers could first have some training in the way they are to go.

And who is to train them? Ballet technique is too specialised; "musical comedy" not specialised enough. There are a very few teachers whose methods could supply dancers with the right outlook for this type of work.

What a pity Martha Graham was unable to appear. She might have revealed the full potentialities of the modern dance and inspired our best choreographers to take this expressive dance form seriously. Once this happens, the teachers and the pupils will be found, and then we shall be well on the way to solving our problems in the realm of musical comedy.



JONATHAN LUCAS,
HELEN GALLAGHER
AND DAVID LOBER
IN "LITTLE BAR OFF
TIMES SQUARE" ONE
OF THE PRODUCTION
NUMBERS BY
HELEN TAMIRIS IN
THE ANGLO-AMERICAN
REVUE "TOUCH
AND GO"

Photograph by
Landseer, London

WHO ARE MISS CILLI WANG?

By LISA GORDON SMITH

THE popularity of Cilli Wang is such that when she returned to the Arts Theatre Club, on May 16th, for her third visit in less than a year, she was welcomed by the audience with a happy enthusiasm seldom accorded to a solo recitalist.

But is Miss Cilli Wang one person, or several? Or even, sometimes, several people at once? Is she even a "person" at all? She may be an attractive young woman who sometimes appears as an Owl Chick, or an Owl Chick who sometimes appears as a dancer—or even two dancers!

A personality as versatile as Cilli Wang may, one feels, include a little white magic among her arts!

When Cilli Wang takes the stage, anything can happen. She may appear as a Russian peasant dancer in bright blue boots. She seems to be doing incredible things with her feet. She *is* doing incredible things. . . . heavens, the woman must be deformed! No, it's all right, they are not real feet at all. The real feet are demurely tucked away in a lot of frilly petticoats and doing very little for their keep. These restless boots are on a skillfully managed pair of false legs—Cilli is dancing with her hands!

Of a pair of Exhibition Dancers, Cilli, who dances extremely well *en travesti*, is the man. Her partner, "Kitty", is a head, a hand and a dress, which Cilli manipulates so cleverly that one could almost swear to catching glimpses of Kitty's feet. Their whispered conversations, their obvious contempt for their audience and the extraordinary way in which Kitty's expression seems to alter are utterly convincing. "Kitty" is as much of a personality to us as she obviously is to her creator!

A Giraffe in evening dress; thus Cilli sees the English Lady—and if that animal does not actually twirl a lorgnette, one feels that it is only a matter of time.

Two Acrobats are Cilli, to wreck a writer's grammar and delight his eyes; a gormless Tyrolean peasant girl who manages to look incredibly like Walter Gore in *Czernyana*; Augustus, a Chubby Lad who grows daily thinner before our very eyes; a radio-conscious Dalmation who could only have been drawn by Thurber or danced by Cilli; a Tulip being given the evillest of eyes by a puppet-bee; your Dad—or mine—pottering in the garden on any fine and sunny Sunday; all these, too, are Cilli Wang.

And the Owl Chick, a beloved, self-confident, self-contained little body who seems to be animated by

Cilli's hands, though there may possibly be more of her involved. He is a lovable—though, one fears, unloving—ball of fluff, as he takes solemn switchback rides on the gnarled tree-root which is his home. He observes life with detachment as he dances, his composure only slightly ruffled as he cuts a complicated *entrechat* and lands on his tail with a piercing "EEEK!"

Cilli Wang is a dancer-actor who, though born and trained in Vienna, has lived in Holland for twelve years and announces firmly that she is Dutch. This rather shy, yet friendly artist, who sometimes looks so tall on the stage, is really very tiny, with soft, fair hair, enormous blue eyes, a beautiful mouth and expressive hands.

She not only dances, but arranges all her own choreography. She not only designs, but also makes, every costume, puppet and mask that she uses. In her spare time, she plays the piano!

A diversity of talents for a diversity of characters; and all the characters are—Miss Cilli Wang!

CILLI WANG WITH "KITTY"

Photograph by Chris Ware (Keystone)



News from Italy

By FERDINAND REYNA

At the May Musical Festival at Florence this year, ballet was represented by two Companies, each presenting its own repertoire of ballets.

Aurel Milloss, with a company which he had recruited in Paris and London, staged two considerable works at Florence; *L'Armide*, an opera-ballet by Lulli which opened the festival and Prokofiev's *Le Chout*.

In *L'Armide*, which Lulli had produced in collaboration with the dancer and choreographer Pecourt, with scenic decor by Berain, Milloss has sought no help from archaeology or reconstruction. While preserving the Baroque line, he has aimed at recreating Lulli's work as a modern producer might conceive it. As is proper in opera-ballet, the real protagonist is the *corps de ballet*; Milloss achieves his effect by synchronising their movements with the singing of an unseen chorus. The principal parts were taken by Maria Dalba, Genevieve Lespagnol, Vladimir Skouratoff and Boris Trailine. The decor of Fabrizio Clerici was most effective in suggesting metaphysical abstraction, and the costumes of Stanilao Lepri also aroused much interest.

Chout (The Buffoon), a ballet with music by Prokofiev, was first staged by Diaghilev at Paris in 1921, with choreography in which Prokofiev himself and the artist Larionov had collaborated. The result was insufficiently remarkable to keep the ballet in the repertoire for long. The management of the May Festival, feeling that Prokofiev's score was too good to be relegated to the position of a mere concert piece, commissioned Aurel Milloss to compose new choreography for the ballet, in collaboration with the artist Renato Guttuso. The script has been re-cast and its scope has been extended beyond that of the simple Russian folk-tale which inspired the original score, the intention being to bring it into line with our more sophisticated taste.

Aurel Milloss has created, in the new version of *Chout*, a ballet sometimes burlesque, sometimes tragic, with some interesting moments. Maria Dalba and Vladimir Skouratoff interpret in a pleasantly ironical vein Prokofiev's music, now gay, now sad, but always colourful and rhythmical.

The second Ballet Company performing at the Florence Festival was that of the Paris Opera, which gave four performances at the Teatro Comunale in Florence beginning on May 28th, as well as two more at Rome. The Comunale's four thousand seats were filled for every performance. The programme consisted of Serge Lifar's ballets: *Salade*, *Suite en Blanc*, *Drama per Musica*, *Entre deux Rondes*, *Divertissement*, *L'Inconnue* and a short ballet, *Pavane for a Dead Infanta*, to Ravel's music. The programme also included

Le Palais de Cristal by Balanchine, which was enthusiastically received by public and critics alike. Tamara Toumanova and Alexandre Kalioujny had a real triumph in the *pas de deux* from *Casse-Noisette*, with new choreography by Alexandre Volinine. Toumanova scored an equal triumph in the second act of *Giselle* at Rome, where the demonstrations of enthusiasm were sensational. Briefly, the Italian public admired the Opera's *corps de ballet*, its training, its discipline and its soloists, but were less enthusiastic in their attitude towards the choreography of Serge Lifar, which they appeared to find uninspired.

The management of the Venice Biennale have this year concentrated on ballet rather than opera. Alternating with symphony concerts, Venice will see in September the Marquis de Cuevas' Company, Ballet Theatre of New York, the New York City Ballet, and possibly still others. It should be a real festival.

The visit to Florence of the Sadler's Wells Company last year has evidently awakened the interest of the Italian public and critics in the ballet, and the crowds which flocked to this year's productions in Florence and Rome has shown that Italy is again associated with the international world of choreography. Up to the present, however, there is no sign of the resurgence of any Italian school of dancing. We shall continue to hope.

End of Season Reflections—(continued from page 5)

does and particularly *Facade*; Alexander Grant in almost everything except *Facade*; Anne Negus and Margaret Dale in *Ballabile*; Kenneth Macmillan as Florestan; Kenneth Melville in many ballets; and Franklin White as the Chief of Police in *Mam'zelle Angot*. The *corps de ballet* maintained its standards as a whole and the boys improved remarkably in precision and vigour; they can now hold their own with almost any visiting company.

Over the long season, performances did, of course, vary considerably. There were some sorry evenings early in the season, due probably to reaction from the American tour, and some dull ones towards the end when everyone was getting tired. But there were some wonderful evenings, too, and looking back over the past six months I find that the enduring memories are the pleasant ones.

The photograph on the cover shows Paul Godkin, John Kriza and Eric Braun in "Fancy Free" which Ballet Theatre will be dancing at the Edinburgh Festival and during their coming season at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

THE CHINESE JAR

By MATTHEW HAYGARTH

IN the early thirties, those people who read verse were startled by an anthology of the works of ten modern poets. Mr. Noël Coward was known as an actor, a writer of witty comedies and the composer of ballads, but among his many activities he had found time to compile this anthology. To introduce the works in *The Spangled Unicorn*, which was the title Mr. Coward gave to his "Golden Treasury", there was a potted biography of each poet, save the last; of which Mr. Coward wrote, "Nothing whatever is known about Ada Johnston."

Some months ago at a dinner party in Chelsea I was placed next to an elegant, grey-haired lady, whose age I guessed to be something in the late fifties. Our hostess said, "I think that you two will find a great deal to talk about, Madame Sevrin used to be a dancer". My fellow guest had seen the first performance of the Russian Ballet in Paris in 1909 at the Chatelet and the first performance of *Le Spectre de la Rose* with Karsavina and Nijinsky. She had been in the audience at the first night of *Sacre du Printemps* and had had her dress torn from her back by a screaming Polynesian music student, berserk under the influence of Stravinsky's barbaric rhythms.

She invited me to call at her flat a few days later and there I heard the amazing history of Madame Sevrin.

She was the daughter of a refugee from the Lettish revolution of 1889; she was born and spent the first years of her life in Manchester, which probably accounted for the fact that she spoke English with a slight Lancashire accent. When she was seven years of age her family moved to the south to live in Clapham where she attended the dancing classes of a Madame Carrie Boote. Madame Boote was not a very good teacher but she had had an interesting career and much of the time that ought to have been spent in instruction in the art of terpsichore was employed in reminiscences of her career on the stage. In the latter half of the reign of Queen Victoria she had been the dancing idol of half the crowned heads of Europe and at one time had earned for herself the title of "The Lola Montez of Lower Schwabia". Playing with her fat bejewelled fingers, she would recount how she had had the supreme compliment paid to her, a compliment such as was paid to the great Taglioni, that of having her glacé kid ballet shoes cooked in white wine and served with an anchovy sauce at a supper given by her admirers after her farewell performance in the Lower Schwabian capital. Such was the first teacher of Adelle Vdder, for that was the name of the little Lettish refugee.

Other teachers followed, Ilse Gamma, Lady Mary Stearate-Houlkes and Gerda Hirde who had learned the Skirt Dance from the great Kate Vaughan. An artiste who had a great influence on her was Isadora Duncan. As we sat by the fire she told me of the first time she saw Isadora. "I was taken to a studio draped with blue curtains, the floor covered with a blue carpet, the room was lit by an amber light. Isadora entered and began to dance, her body was swathed in a piece of wonderful Chinese embroidery and she wore a bodice of *broderie anglaise*, her dark hair was rolled in a loose knot at the nape of her neck. After she had danced she stood by the piano in the corner and apologised for the incongruity of the piano music, saying—"not even an orchestra of a hundred musicians could play fit music for such a dance—there should be no music save such music as Pan might make on a reed cut from the bank of a stream in Arcady."

In 1913 Adelle Vdder appeared in a number of dance recitals in Ascona where she met and married Kale Johnston, a sardine packer from the west coast of America and it was under her married name of Ada Johnston that she began to write poetry. Her first volume, "Lot's Lot", had a big success in the United States. The poem *Sunburn* in the Coward anthology appeared in this early volume. Other volumes followed, of which "Sally's Alley" and "The Rape of Lob" are perhaps the best known. Meanwhile under her maiden name of Adelle Vdder she gave dance recitals in the Middle West, Greenwich Village and toured the South American Republics. Negotiations were started by which she was to appear in several films and then tragedy came into her life. After a few days illness Kale Johnston died from the effects of fish poisoning. This great poet, this graceful dancer, found herself the owner of a sardine packing factory which she went to manage, the problem for her was that of oil or tomato.

On the restoration of the Lettish Monarchy in 1921, her father, Lash Vdder returned from his exile in England to his native country. A few months later he persuaded his daughter to leave the United States and join him. The following year she was invited to found and direct the Lettish Royal Academy of the Dance. In 1930 she married her famous compatriot, the composer Krsmary.

Among her pupils at the Lettish Royal Academy of the Dance was the now famous ballet master Antim Crud, who recently paid a visit to this country. She spoke with great enthusiasm of the New Dance which



Photograph by Melton-Pippin

FREDERICK ASHTON, ALICIA MARKOVA AND GEORGE BALANCHINE PHOTOGRAPHED AFTER THE FIRST NIGHT OF "ILLUMINATIONS" IN NEW YORK

is the result of Crud's researches in the field of ancient Iranian Dance Writing. Crud's New Dance is based on the five positions of the Classical Ballet with the addition of six other positions, five of which are negative and are known as *posizioni di retrocedimentos* and the sixth which is most important is zero. She expressed the opinion that it would be wonderful if the British Council could arrange a visit to Covent Garden of the Lettish National Ballet.

Some months ago Adelle Vdder married a third time; her husband is Knif Sevrin the famous harpsichord player and former pupil of Krsmaly at the Knerz Conservatoire. He was the first musician to introduce the work of his former master to audiences in Western Europe. In the summer of 1938, at a concert organised by the Wigmore Society, he played *Sonate Sans Son*.

When I asked Madame Sevrin if she had done any literary work since she left the United States, she told me that during the years at Knerz with Krsmaly she had written many poems, some of which had been set to music by Krsmaly in the form of the Song Cycle *Les Chansons de Rien*. At the present time she is writing a biography of Krsmaly which she hopes to have ready

for publication in the spring of next year.

As I left her flat I asked, "And what are your plans for the future?", to which she replied with a smile, "NOTHING IS PLANNED".

Bouquet of the Month



If LESLIE EDWARDS will not scorn to accept it, *Ballet Today* would like to present him with this month's bouquet for his frenetic dancer of the Charleston in *Facade*—a recreation of a period so exact that it causes reminiscent chills down the spine of all those who remember only too well what once they looked like.

SPECIAL COMPETITION

HERE is a new kind of Quiz Competition to while away your leisure moments between or during queueing.

Due for publication by Messrs. A. & C. Black Ltd. in October is a book called *Dancers and Critics*. Thirteen leading critics in England, France and the United States were asked to write an essay on their critical approach to dancing and to apply their viewpoint to a particular dancer of *their own choice*. Here,

in alphabetical order, is the list of dancers: Jean Babilée, Yvette Chauviré, Alexandra Danilova, Margot Fonteyn, Beryl Grey, Robert Helpmann, Nora Kaye, Alicia Markova, Georges Skibine, Irène Skorik, Maria Tallchief, Tamara Toumanova, Nina Vyroubova.

Printed below, also in alphabetical order, is the list of critics. All you have to do is to fill in beside each critic, the name of the dancer you think that particular critic will have chosen.

COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

NAME
(BLOCK LETTERS)

ADDRESS.....
.....
.....
.....

1. Cyril W. Beaumont
2. Caryl Brahms
3. Anatole Chujoy
4. A. V. Coton
5. A. H. Franks
6. Arnold Haskell
7. Joan Lawson
8. Irène Lidova
9. P. W. Manchester
10. Pierre Michaut
11. Walter Terry
12. Léandre Vaillat
13. Audrey Williamson

By arrangement with A. & C. Black Ltd, a copy of *Dancers and Critics* will be sent to each of the senders of the first twelve correct (or nearest correct) lists received at this office by September 12th. Results will be published in the November (out on October 20th) issue of *Ballet Today*.

The Editor's decision must be final.

Post your entry, or entries to; "Competition", *Ballet Today*, 4, Holborn Place, London, W.C.1.

Each entry must be made out on this form, though for the convenience of those who wish to send in more than one entry they may all be posted in one envelope.

Gala Performances of Ballet

CONTINENTAL Opera and Ballet Entertainments Ltd. is a company which has been formed to present Gala Performances of Ballet with Anton Dolin as *premier danseur* and Artistic Director, with a company of eighty which includes Natalie Krassovska (formerly prima ballerina with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo) and Anna Cheselka and John Gilpin, both until recently leading dancers with the Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo. The repertoire will include *Swan Lake*, *Act 2*, *Les Sylphides* and *Nutcracker* while there will also be revivals of *Petrouchka* with the Benois decor and *Le*

Beau Danube. An autumn season in London is planned when Markova will rejoin this company which has developed out of the Markova-Dolin Company. Everyone will be glad to know that Markova has made a complete recovery from her recent operation for appendicitis.

Gala Performances of Ballet commenced at the King's Theatre, Southsea, on August 14th. Here are the dates for the following four weeks:—

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Week of Aug. 21st | Alhambra, Bradford. |
| „ „ Aug. 28th | Empire, Sheffield. |
| „ „ Sept. 4th | Theatre Royal, Nottingham. |
| „ „ Sept. 11th | Theatre Royal, Newcastle. |

News from Canada

THE first season of the Canadian Dance Teachers' Association has just been completed and has proved itself a great success. Teachers feel it will do a great deal towards raising the standards of dancing and dance teaching in Canada.

Whilst Sadler's Wells Ballet were in Canada last year both Harold Turner and Mary Skeaping (ballet mistress) gave lectures as did Miss Ruth French on a visit from England. In addition to actual class work, the association also showed educational films and other guest speakers gave talks on Folk, Tap, Ballroom and Musical Comedy dancing as well as Ballet, stage production and Mime. Technical committees have now been elected to cover Tap, Acrobatic and Ballroom dancing.

The Third Annual Dance Festival will take place in Montreal in November at His Majesty's Theatre. The First Festival took place in Winnipeg and the second in Toronto). Fifteen ballet groups have been invited to take part: seven from Montreal, two from Ottawa, two from Toronto, two from Vancouver, one from Winnipeg and one from Halifax. To ensure a higher standard, an adjudicator (Mr. Guy Glover, an Executive Producer of the National Film Board) was appointed to choose the items, and from forty-five dance works he has picked at least thirty which will be staged at the Festival. Mr. Glover says that during the past year he feels that there has been a marked improvement in dance style and a much higher degree of creative choreography.

IF YOU HAVE A FRIEND who you think would be interested in "Ballet Today" please send us the name and address and we will post a specimen copy.

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